

The Beyond School Conference
**Exploring Employment Opportunities and Post-Secondary Education
for Young Adults with Developmental Disabilities**

Purpose

This project will assemble persons with developmental disabilities, family members, others who support them and providers/professionals, in a forum to exchange information regarding what's happening at the state and federal levels to expand opportunities for young adult high school students with developmental disabilities seeking to enter the worlds of employment and post-secondary education.

Background

Young adults with developmental disabilities poised to transition from high school face a rigorous and uncertain future when seeking to find competitive, integrated employment in the community. The current economy combined with the need to provide support in seeking work and maintaining employment establishes potential obstacles that are difficult to overcome.

Young adults are also challenged with finding appropriate routes to participate in post-secondary education upon graduation. In recognizing the post-secondary education can be a gateway to future employment, understanding how to access opportunities is important to persons with developmental disabilities and their families.

Project Components

- The primary focus is to increase the knowledge base, interests, and skill sets of persons with developmental disabilities and their family members. The secondary focus is to reach providers and professionals supporting them in the areas of competitive employment and post-secondary education.
- To reach this goal, the project will hold a conference in the Phoenix greater metropolitan area inviting 150 participants. The event will be held in a location that is accessible by public transportation and which offers facility services that make it functional for a diverse audience.
- The proposed time-frame of the project will focus on the early fall of 2012 and winter of 2013, with formal planning to begin in the spring and summer of 2012.
- The target audience includes persons with developmental disabilities, their family members, and professionals/providers. Involvement of family members will be emphasized with a target goal of 60% representation in the event by family members.
- To maximize outreach, the conference will provide stipends for individuals and family members to encourage participation and attendance.
- This project will seek to perpetuate future events in other remote parts of Arizona using a mini-conference approach.

Budget

Conference planning/expenses not to exceed \$80,000. Budget items include but not limited to: site rental, auxiliary services, speakers, presenters, conference materials production and printing, stipends and accommodations.

Conference and Post-Conference Evaluation

Assessing the effectiveness and impact of the conference will be essential to measure outcomes and determine if the event contributed to increased opportunities for employment and post-secondary education. Tools will be developed linked to the goals of the project and other requirements.

Partnerships and Collaboration

This project will rely on multiple partnerships to plan, coordinate, and present the conference. Partners are listed below, but not limited to:

- DES – Division of Developmental Disabilities & Rehabilitation Services Administration
- Untapped Arizona
- Think College
- Sonoran University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, U of A
- Institute for Human Development, NAU
- Arizona Center for Disability Law
- Native American Disability Law Center
- Employment First Workgroup

Proposed Conference Format

8:00 – 9:00	Registration
9:00 – 9:20	Welcome from DD Network/invited officials/ etc.
9:30 – 10:15	Keynote 1 -- Employment First – making competitive employment a reality for people with DD
10:30 – 11:15	Keynote 2 – Post-secondary education for people with DD – National successes
11:30 – 12:45	Workshops (concurrent sessions) Potential topics: Higher Education and DD in Arizona: What is happening? Promising Practices in Employment in Arizona Moving from workshop to workplace – what has worked for providers and families Preparing our youth for greater opportunities – the role of family, schools and the service system Self-employment, national service, and volunteerism: to enter the workforce Employment and Benefits Planning
12:45 – 2:00	Lunch -- Panel – self-advocates working in competitive employment/participating in higher ed.
2:15 - 3:30	Workshops (concurrent sessions) Potential topics see above
3:45 - 4:00	Closing